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Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued) (A/50/123-S/1995/228, A/50/254-S/1995/201, A/50/255-S/1995/504, A/50/400, A/50/407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/466-S/1995/817, A/50/475, A/50/487 and A/50/518)

(b) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/50/8 and Add.1)

(c) UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II) (continued) (A/50/37, A/50/411, A/50/519)

1. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that on the eve of the year 2000 the number of homeless people was continuing to increase considerably, in both developed and developing countries. The statistics indicated that by the year 2000, half the world's population would live in cities. That was an alarming prospect when housing construction was not keeping up with population growth.

2. Benin was participating actively in the work of the Preparatory Committee and felt that the holding of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) within the framework of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty would motivate the participants to formulate new and specific recommendations for the short and medium term. Bearing in mind the main themes of the Conference: "Adequate shelter for all" and "Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world", Benin felt that it was not only settlements problems of urban areas which should be stressed. Although urban centres were faced with serious problems arising from growth, which were exacerbated by the economic crisis and the policies of structural adjustment programmes, there must be a balance with the problems of medium and small towns since national administrations tended to accord low priority to them.

3. The cultural dimension of human settlements should also be borne in mind. In Africa, for example, traditional cultural models made it possible to organize the supply of food and establishment of infrastructures and services, and at the same time promoted social cohesion, unlike Western models, which were rational and bureaucratic, but were less efficient.

4. Mr. PRODJOWARSITO (Indonesia), referring to agenda item 95 (b), commended the extensive work carried out by the Preparatory Committees for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II); and expressed full support for the Conference, and confidence that the commitments reached at the Conference would have a major impact on the efforts of the international community to develop sustainable human settlements.

5. The phenomenon of urbanization, entailing an enormous influx of people to megacities, gave rise to a deterioration of human settlements and was a formidable challenge which must be confronted through sustainable people-centred development. Broad-based participation at the grass-roots level was essential; it could be said that the current and future challenge of sustainable development was a challenge of urban settlements.

6. Indonesia was the fourth most densely populated country in the world and was therefore acutely aware of the magnitude of those problems. It therefore attached great importance to the work of the Preparatory Committee and hoped that, at its third session, it would make significant progress in the elaboration of the Global Plan of Action.

7. In accordance with the agreements adopted by the Preparatory Committee, Indonesia had established a national committee in preparation for the Conference and had started work on its national report. In addition to its participation in the deliberations of the Preparatory Committee, his Government, at the national level, had encouraged the involvement of all sectors of society, from government officials to the private sector, and from non-governmental organizations to academics and professionals, in the preparations for the Conference. For example, in August 1995, in cooperation with Habitat, the private sector had hosted regional conferences on land security and tenure.

8. Lastly, considering that some countries, especially the least developed countries, did not have the necessary resources to attend the next session of the Preparatory Committee and the Conference itself, Indonesia appealed to the developed countries to provide assistance so as to ensure that the deliberations and outcome would be truly democratic and universal. His delegation also called on the General Assembly to endorse decisions II/1, II/2, II/3 and II/4 adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its second session.

9. Mr. JALLOW (Gambia), referring to the imbalance at the global level between the availability of housing and the size of the population, a problem which extended to the regional and national levels and was compounded by rapid urbanization and inequalities of income, said that that situation highlighted the need for the international community to become involved and for the programmes adopted in 1976 to be improved. Africa's interest in the issues to be addressed by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was reflected in the Johannesburg Declaration on a common African position, which concerned issues relating to an enabling political environment, rural and urban balance, the administration of cities and towns, good governance, community-based participation and partnership, including the role of non-governmental organizations and the private and informal sectors, poverty eradication, disaster mitigation, security, the situation of refugees and displaced persons, the enhancement of institutional and technical capacity, the role of women and youth, the development of local materials and technical assistance and cooperation.

10. Gambia had been fully integrated in the preparatory process for the Conference since 1994, when it had established its national committee and, subsequently, had set up six subcommittees and a technical advisory committee consisting of human settlement experts from both the private and public sectors. Gambia also had a committee on human and housing indicators and was well ahead in the preparation of its national report and plan of action. The national secretariat had also prepared case-studies on best practice to be submitted to the conference to be held in Dubai in November 1995.

11. While Gambia appreciated the invaluable technical assistance it had been receiving from the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), it was

still constrained in the full implementation of all aspects of the preparatory process and the national programme, and had therefore appealed to the Habitat secretariat for greater financial assistance.

12. In that respect, the Global Plan of Action to be adopted at Habitat II would give rise to the need for an expansion of the mandate of the Habitat secretariat to serve as the focal point for the coordination of the decisions of the Conference, if necessary under the auspices of an enlarged Commission on Human Settlements, a role that it would no doubt fulfil effectively because of its recognized experience and expertise in the sphere of human settlements.

13. Mr. YAMPOLSKY (Ukraine), referring to the topic of human settlements, said that the prospects were hopeful but alarming. On the one hand, opportunities were being found for the application of new models of international cooperation and major structural changes were taking place, even in countries with economies in transition; on the other hand, many countries were facing serious economic and human-settlement problems, as well as increases in poverty, homelessness, crime and unemployment.

14. The convening of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was therefore both appropriate and necessary. He welcomed the outcome of the work of the Preparatory Committee and of the Commission on Human Settlements, particularly Commission resolution 15/1 concerning the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, as well as the attention which had been given to countries with economies in transition in other relevant resolutions. However, he supported the Russian Federation's statement that those countries' problems had been insufficiently taken into account in the work of the Preparatory Committee.

15. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had not maintained close links with the United Nations specialized agencies which were concerned with human settlements. Since gaining its independence, however, it had become much more aware of the importance of the Habitat programme and, in accordance with its policies and with international principles and strategies, it had decided to establish a national committee to make preparations for the Conference. That committee's mandate at the State, regional and local levels was to formulate housing strategies, improve living conditions, reform housing policy and work together with citizens on problem-solving in areas such as urban construction.

16. Ukraine was one of the most urbanized and densely populated States in Europe, with a population of 52.2 million, and a third of its territory was occupied by human settlements. More than 68 per cent of the Ukrainian population lived in towns. A problem which was characteristic of Ukraine, as with other countries with economies in transition, was that of the development of human settlements; industry was highly concentrated in the towns, and transport systems were inadequate and underdeveloped. A number of regions had ecological problems, owing to the insufficient development of facilities for the provision of drinking water, water purification, and the use and storage of industrial waste.

17. Because of the complexity of the ecological and socio-economic problems caused by the Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine attached great importance to the

reform of the principles governing the use of land and of its resources and the reconstruction and development of human settlements, as well as the reform of the land management system and of the relevant laws.

18. His Government was most interested in other countries' positive experiences with international organizations in connection with the construction of urban housing; there were some cases which could serve as examples for the creation of local management bodies and non-governmental organizations, or private-sector initiatives.

19. Attention should also be given to the area of the development of human settlements. For example, an international system of indicators could be introduced, to serve as a basis for analyses and evaluations which would help to guide housing sector management when work was being done in several countries.

20. Support should be provided to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, and international indicators should be used.

21. Mr. MBATHA (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the sustainable development of human settlements and the principle of adequate shelter for all were priority areas of particular interest to SADC. The Community was actively seeking to ensure broad participation at the City Summit. The Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Human Settlements had met in Johannesburg in October 1995 to consolidate country, subregional and regional strategy towards effective African participation in the Habitat II process.

22. In the context of the important role which cities and urban areas played in economic, political, social and cultural development, the complementarity between urban and rural areas and their respective communities should be taken into account. All sectors of society, including the private and informal sectors, should participate in formulating appropriate programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of all people on a sustainable basis. The needs and contributions of youth should also be taken fully into account in order for constructive actions to be taken for the well-being of young people.

23. The empowerment of women was fundamental for achieving sustainable human development. The inclusion of women in decision-making processes and the removal of barriers inhibiting their full participation in human settlement development would ensure that women would benefit equally from improved income levels, shelter and health care.

24. In order to stimulate the implementation of the Habitat II agenda, financial mechanisms would need to be developed in order to strengthen existing mechanisms and create the necessary support for international, regional and national endeavours. The overall approach to the housing challenge proposed by SADC was to mobilize and harness the combined resources, efforts and initiatives of communities, the private commercial sector and the State in a complementary way. Special emphasis should be placed on the role and responsibility of all actors in maximizing job creation, skills transfer, capacity-building and upward mobility for both skilled and unskilled labour in the housing arena, and

particularly the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in housing construction.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(d) PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND (A/50/536, A/50/716)

(e) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (A/50/422 and Add.1)

25. Mr. DESAI (Under Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/42 and Add.1), prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 49/122, provided an account of action taken by the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and of institutional arrangements made by United Nations organizations regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action. The report was an update of the report on the same subject-matter (A/49/425 and Add.1) submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

26. The ongoing and planned activities of the United Nations system taken together broadly covered the provisions of the entire Programme of Action. The Commission on Sustainable Development would carry out an initial review of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action at its next session in 1996.

27. In the area of regional coordination, the relevant regional organizations had reported that they had taken initiatives to fulfil their mandates. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had held regional meetings to identify immediate regional priorities and had established coordination mechanisms in collaboration with regional intergovernmental organizations. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had reported that it was consulting with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the country level for possible joint activities. The Inter-agency Commission on Sustainable Development was the mechanism for system-wide coordination.

28. In response to General Assembly resolution 49/100, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had taken the initiative, in collaboration with the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of organizing an inter-sessional panel discussion during the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on trade-related issues affecting small island developing States.

29. The Secretary-General would submit a report to the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on current donor activities to implement the Programme of Action, which would contain a detailed account of financial assistance being made available to those countries from both bilateral and multilateral sources.

30. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/122, a Small Island Developing States Unit had been established within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, which would carry out the functions specified in the Programme of Action.

31. Mr. ZAMMIT-CUTAJAR (Executive Secretary of the interim secretariat, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) presented two reports under item 96 (d): the final report of the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC/FCCC) (A/50/536) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/716).

32. The first Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Berlin, had been the major event of the year for the Convention. It had given shape to the institutions and mechanisms of the Convention and mandated new efforts to suggest responses to climate change, including the Berlin Mandate. The content of the outcome of the first Conference of the Parties to the Convention was described in chapter III of the report of the Secretary-General.

33. The main thrust of the report of the Secretary-General concerned the institutional linkage that the Conference wished to establish between the secretariat for the Convention and the United Nations. There were two basic reasons for that linkage: first, the Convention's membership was approaching that of the Assembly itself, and second, climate change was not only a global environmental concern but also a key dimension of sustainable development, both nationally and internationally. It was difficult to imagine the United Nations pursuing its aims for sustainable development, through Agenda 21, without retaining a link with the Convention. For its part, the Conference's interest in such a link might be understood as a desire for institutional economy (avoiding the creation of a new institution) and a wish to maintain a secure anchorage in the regulations, rules, practices and services of the United Nations.

34. It was important to guarantee the financial health of the Convention process, and to that end the individual parties must make some or all of their contributions to the 1996 budget before the due date of 1 January. However, since those contributions did not provide for the costs of conference services, the other necessary measure was that the current General Assembly should respond favourably to the request to finance those services, a request made in the name of more than 140 Member States whose collective share of the United Nations budget was some 95 per cent.

35. In the following two years the Convention would have many difficulties to overcome, not only at the scientific level but also in relation to relocating its secretariat to Bonn, Germany, beginning the following July. The Convention would need a solid institutional and financial base to complete its work successfully.

36. Mrs. REBONG (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that protection of the global climate had ceased being a topic discussed only by experts and scientists to become a concern of everybody, since what was at stake was the survival of humankind. It was therefore satisfying to note that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had been ratified

by 144 States and one regional economic integration organization. Another noteworthy event was the holding in Berlin of the first session of the Conference of the Parties. The Group of 77 and China hoped that the meeting would lead to a strengthening of the Convention, and remained fully committed to its objectives.

37. The Group of 77 and China urged the developed countries to promote the implementation of the Convention by providing new, additional resources and transferring environmentally sound technologies under preferential conditions.

38. At their nineteenth ministerial meeting, held in September, the Group of 77 and China had called on the international community to give special priority to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Implementation of that Programme of Action also required adequate resources, as well as the transfer of technology, fair and non-discriminatory trade agreements, and human resource development.

39. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had confirmed that the phenomenon of global warming was continuing, a fact that underlined the urgent need to meet the challenge of the negative effects of that phenomenon, especially in the developing countries. Steps should be taken to that end as soon as possible, based on the principle of shared but different responsibilities.

40. Mr. ACEBO (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed its satisfaction with the results of the first Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and reaffirmed its commitment to stabilize carbon dioxide emissions within the Union by the year 2000, and asked the other parties included in annex I to do the same. The decision contained in the Berlin Mandate to begin to adopt measures for the period beginning in the year 2000 was an important step. The establishment of the Convention's permanent secretariat in Bonn would contribute to strengthening the Convention.

41. The forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would examine progress made in applying the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States, adopted in Barbados in 1994. The European Union remained fully committed to assisting that Programme of Action and was providing financial and technical assistance, along with the agencies and organs of the United Nations system.

42. Mr. SHIBATA (Vice-Chairman of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), speaking on behalf of Dr. Merkel, Chairman of the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, said that the first session of the Conference of the Parties had been a key event in the follow-up process to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, and had set in motion the implementation of the Convention in a spirit of cooperation and mutual trust.

43. After extremely difficult negotiations, the parties had agreed upon the Berlin Mandate for negotiating further commitments on limiting and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, since the consensus opinion was that current

commitments by the industrialized countries were not adequate. No new commitments would be required from the developing countries; however, all the parties reaffirmed their existing commitments. In addition, a special group had been set up to draft a protocol or some other legal instrument. Such a document should contain ambitious targets for global climate protection.

44. Another decision of great importance for the implementation of the Convention was the decision on national communications from annex I Parties. All such communications would be studied in depth as soon as possible by working groups of experts nominated by both annex I and non-annex I Parties. Information contained in the national communications could be useful in the implementation of the Berlin Mandate and would increase the opportunities for cooperation within the framework of the Convention. The Conference had requested its subsidiary bodies to formulate guidelines for the preparation of such communications and to make proposals for the process of considering them.

45. Also worthy of note was the agreement reached by the Conference concerning joint implementation of activities by annex I Parties during a pilot phase. The pilot phase could contribute to establishing new forms of cooperation and enhancing the diffusion and transfer of technology. The first step would be the establishment of a framework for Parties to report on their activities. Experience gained in that way and progress on methodological issues should make it possible to design a regime for activities to be implemented jointly beyond the pilot phase, by the end of the present decade at the latest. For that process to be productive, in addition to political will, stable institutional arrangements were necessary. The Conference had already adopted a number of decisions on institutional, administrative and financial arrangements for the Conference of the Parties itself and for the Convention secretariat.

46. Some of those decisions required specific action by the General Assembly. The first such decision concerned the establishment of institutional links between the Convention secretariat and the United Nations. That linkage, which did not involve integration in the work programme or administrative structure of any particular department, would be reviewed by the Conference, in consultation with the Secretary-General. The interim secretariat of the Convention had thus far supported the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, with the help of the General Assembly. To carry on working within the framework of the rules and regulations of the United Nations would be very advantageous for the Convention secretariat. Such an institutional linkage would mean not only that the Convention secretariat could count on adequate administrative support services, but also that its governing body would be accountable to the Secretary-General. The Conference of the Parties would make every effort to facilitate the work of the secretariat, particularly in the area of financial and personnel operations. All that was needed therefore was a decision by the General Assembly endorsing the Secretary-General's initiative.

47. Another question requiring a decision from the General Assembly concerned the provision of conference services. In the past, the United Nations had provided conference services and facilities, and it was expected to carry on doing so until the end of 1995. However, the work related to the Convention was of a long-term nature. The Conference of the Parties was therefore asking the

General Assembly to decide, bearing in mind the proposed institutional linkage and the large number of States which were already Parties to the Convention, to finance from the regular budget of the United Nations the conference services for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies.

48. An item specifically related to climate had first been placed on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1988. By 1990, Governments were ready to start negotiations on a framework convention, which was ratified two years later in Rio de Janeiro by 144 States and one regional economic integration organization. Once the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee completed its mandate, the General Assembly, rather than deciding to dissolve that body, assigned to it the task of preparing for the first session of the Conference of the Parties, thereby ensuring that the intergovernmental work on the Convention remained a priority for Governments. As a result of that decision the Framework Convention had entered into force in March 1994. Had the General Assembly not acted as catalyst and had it not provided the institutional support, the Framework Convention process would not have been so rapid and satisfactory.

49. Climate protection was one of the greatest challenges at the present time. Unless measures were taken quickly, the consequences would be irreversible. The threat to the existence of small island States posed by a rise in sealevels was a perfect example. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility on which the Convention was based should be accepted by all parties. The continued support of the General Assembly was also necessary if the commitment of the international community was to be maintained.

50. Mrs. des ILES (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that, in approving the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, the international community had recognized the unique characteristics and vulnerability of the small island States, for whom sustainability was synonymous with survival. It was very important for the small island States that the outcome of the 1994 Barbados Conference should be adequately reflected in the sustainable development programmes and activities of the United Nations. The members of the Alliance were satisfied with the establishment of the Small Island Developing States Unit within the Sustainable Development Division.

51. In the light of the financial crisis facing the United Nations, the 31 Member States who were members of the Alliance of Small Island States had no choice but to accept a minimal allocation of resources to a programme which was extremely important to them. Their position was that the current allocation of resources from the regular budget of the United Nations to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was the absolute minimum acceptable to members of the Alliance.

52. The Barbados Programme of Action was of necessity a wide-ranging and multi-faceted programme, implementation of which would require the continued attention and efforts of the whole United Nations system. It went without saying that if it was to succeed, or even simply to survive, a central coordinating and monitoring unit was needed. The Small Island Developing States Unit had been set up to meet that need; it served as a point of liaison for Governments and

all parts of the United Nations system concerned with the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The Alliance welcomed the preparation by the Unit of a publication on some sources of funding for environmental projects accessible to the Member States who formed the Alliance. The Alliance attached great importance to the work of the Unit on the establishment, in collaboration with UNCTAD, of a high-level panel which would consider in 1996 the problems faced by the small island developing States in the area of external trade.

53. The members of the Alliance attached particular importance to the regional measures taken by various regional economic commissions intended to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. Those commissions should be provided with the resources which would enable them to assist in taking the measures needed at the regional and subregional levels to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

54. The members of the Alliance expressed their particular interest in the role of UNDP in the implementation of the Programme of Action and would continue to rely on UNDP resources in the critical area of capacity-building, in particular through the Capacity 21 Fund. The Alliance was grateful for the fact that UNDP had nearly completed a directory of institutions and scholars with expertise on small island States and for its continued implementation of the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP) through assessment and project formulation exercises to be carried out in the various subregions with a view to mobilizing support and funding for the implementation of priority projects. The Alliance also pledged to continue working with UNDP on the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDS/NET).

55. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on action taken by the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/50/422), he noted that the concluding observations (chapter III) expressed an optimism with regard to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action which was not shared by members of the Alliance, who felt that much remained to be done and that it would have been preferable to provide a more incisive analysis of what had been achieved thus far and of the limitations of those achievements. It was necessary to examine all the means used thus far in order to formulate a clearer implementation strategy for the future; that might be achieved during the preparations for the initial review of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

56. The natural disasters which had recently occurred in the Caribbean and the Pacific were a reminder of the need for decisive action to reduce global warming through the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken under the provisions of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the strengthening of those commitments in the future. The Alliance, which had had its genesis in the context of the negotiations for the Convention on Climate Change, was undaunted in its determination to promote a more effective and stronger Convention.

57. In September 1994, the Alliance had submitted a draft protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which it had hoped would be adopted at the First Conference of the Parties, held in Berlin in early 1995. The draft protocol asked developed countries to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide by the year 2005 to a level at least 20 per cent below that attained in 1990 and

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to establish timetables for controlling emissions of other greenhouse gases, but the decision of the Berlin Conference had fallen short of the expectations of the Alliance countries. The Alliance was nevertheless pleased that the Berlin Conference had concluded that the commitments undertaken in the Convention were inadequate to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the global climate system. The Alliance would continue working to ensure that a legal instrument was adopted to respond adequately to the long-term problems of climate change.

58. Success in protecting the global climate required the collective action of all members of the international community but, given the contribution of the industrialized countries to global emissions and their financial and technological capabilities, they must lead the way in meeting the problems of climate change; that was a fundamental principle which had been expressly acknowledged by the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The provisions and commitments contained in the present Framework Convention must be implemented in their totality, and developing countries must be provided with the support and technology which they needed in order to contribute to bringing the climate system to an acceptable equilibrium.

59. The Alliance would continue to participate in the discussions and negotiations on climate change, acting not only in its own interest but also in the wider global interest; in that spirit, it sought the cooperation and support of the international community for the protection of the global climate for present and future generations.

60. Ms. WILLIAMS-STEWART (Samoa) said that in recent times the world community had witnessed the climate changes that were occurring everywhere, accompanied by great loss of human lives and damage to property. The effects of those phenomena on economies, and on the prospects for sustainable development of small island States, were devastating.

61. At the annual meeting of the South Pacific Forum, which had been held two months previously in Papua New Guinea, political leaders had expressed their concern with regard to climate change in the region. For those countries, the phenomenon of climate change was a constant worry; for that reason, during the discussions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, the Alliance countries had put forward the idea of a protocol to the Framework Convention as a realistic way to strengthen the commitments made under the Convention. The idea of setting up a protocol had been examined in Berlin at the first Conference of the Parties; she welcomed the real achievements of that conference, particularly the recognition by the parties of the inadequacy of the commitments made under paragraphs 2 (a) and (b) of article 4 of the Convention and the decision to begin a process of action beyond the year 2000. The Berlin Mandate was an acknowledgement of the seriousness and sense of responsibility with which the parties regarded the question of greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on climate change. In that regard, she noted that her delegation had taken part in two sessions of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Berlin Mandate. Despite the progress achieved by the Working Group, certain matters of fundamental importance must be kept in mind: first, the element of urgency since, under the Berlin Mandate, the Working Group had barely two years to complete a series of tasks which were extensive and complex in their technical

aspects and policy implications; second, the fact that there were clear indications which confirmed that human beings could induce climate change and which had led the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to assess the need for urgent action, pointing out the economic feasibility of such action. In that respect, her delegation wished once again to register the concern of her country, and other countries of the Alliance, with regard to the work of analysis and assessment which was being called for by other parties since such work might duplicate that of the Intergovernmental Panel and other relevant bodies and might unnecessarily delay the timely conclusion of the Berlin Mandate process.

62. Samoa set a high priority on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and welcomed the work being done in that field by international, regional and non-governmental organizations. Clearly, the Programme of Action could not be considered in isolation from the international efforts being made in other fields related to sustainable development such as programmes on population issues, women, social development and the protection of the environment. Samoa appreciated the respective roles of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and hoped that the establishment of the Small Island Developing States Unit as part of the Division for Sustainable Development would lead to greater and more effective capacity to assist those States on development issues.

63. SIDS/NET and SIDS/TAP had great potential for networking and for the sharing of much needed information and technical expertise among small island developing States, but there was a need to move forward to real action at the national and regional levels.

64. In 1994, the leaders of the South Pacific Forum had established a consultative mechanism to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Within that framework, a database of activities to implement the Programme of Action had been set up and would help to coordinate follow-up activities to that programme.

65. Samoa recognized that the primary responsibility for implementing the Programme of Action lay with the small island States themselves, and it had endeavoured to implement some of the measures adopted at the 1992 Rio Conference and to translate the recommendations of Agenda 21 into a national programme of action. To that end, it had initiated a process of policy review in all sectors to ensure consistency with the objective of sustainable development. In that regard, she noted that policies had been set up to govern the allocation, use and management of natural resources, in particular forests, fresh water, fisheries and agriculture. New policies and strategies governing population, the protection of biodiversity and waste management were currently being formulated, and a broadly consultative approach to policy formulation and programme implementation involving non-governmental organizations and the community at large was being encouraged. Samoa's legislation was also being reviewed in order to strengthen the functions of the principal governmental agencies concerned with the environment, including the mandatory application of environmental impact assessments.

66. The Barbados Programme of Action encouraged the use of environmental impact assessments in the protection of the marine and coral reef environment of small island States. Accordingly, Samoa called upon France to conduct such assessments immediately, before continuing with its nuclear testing programme in Mururoa, which was hazardous to the health, environment and sustainable development of the peoples of the Pacific. There was a significant body of scientific opinion that contradicted the complacency of France's assurances that there was no danger from its nuclear tests, which were being carried out with disregard for the health and environment of the peoples of the South Pacific region.

67. Effective implementation, monitoring and review of the Programme of Action were essential to the sustainable development process. While strides had been made towards economic growth and sustainable development, the implementation of the Programme was very dependent upon international cooperation, which Samoa hoped would continue and expand.

68. Mr. PAWAR (India) said that the Framework Convention on Climate Change did not deal solely with the control of greenhouse gases; the eradication of poverty, sustained economic growth in the developing countries, the avoidance of risk to food production and to the livelihood and habitat of the poor were also integral to the Convention, where the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was very clear. In annex I, the Parties had undertaken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and had agreed to provide developing countries with new resources and make environmentally sound technology available to them on preferential and concessional terms. It was extremely important to abide by those Rio de Janeiro commitments.

69. The adverse effects of climate change were increasingly manifest. Most countries recognized that the commitments under the Convention were inadequate, yet no serious efforts were being made to meet the targets, and after the agreement reached in Berlin to work for quantified objectives for the reduction of greenhouse gases, it appeared that the opportunity was being taken even to challenge the existing commitments.

70. Equitable burden-sharing in emission reduction had no meaning without a full accounting of the scope of the emissions and without an equitable and equal sharing of environmental space. According to conservative estimates, the privileges enjoyed by the developed countries through their excessive emissions amounted to $100 billion annually. That was the amount of environmental rent that they ought to pay to the developing countries for eating into their environmental space. Instead, the developed countries were reluctant to transfer new and additional resources; official development assistance was declining because of supposed donor fatigue and lack of domestic support. As for the developing countries, their lack of development had prevented them from using and benefiting from the earth's global commons. There could be no comparison between the survival emissions of the developing countries and the luxury emissions of the developed countries. Delays in emission reduction by the industrialized nations were increasingly reducing the opportunities and options available to the developing countries and increasing the costs of adapting to the changing global climate.

71. India had participated actively in the process leading to the elaboration of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. That Programme of Action adopted in Barbados had recognized that small island developing States and islands supporting small communities would require special programmes and approaches appropriate to their special situations, problems and needs. In a certain sense, they embodied a unique and peculiar vulnerability to a combination of ecological fragility, natural disasters and the vagaries of the international economic situation. The small size of their populations, resource space and markets, their relative geographic isolation and the wide differences in ecological and geographical characteristics hindered their ability to achieve self-sustaining development.

72. The development of those islands required, inter alia, programmes for the maintenance, regeneration and restoration of the ecosystem in order to exploit productive potential and also provide employment to local communities. India had found decentralization and the involvement of local communities to be an effective way of managing that process, and had created bodies and institutional structures for the purpose, which meant that human resource development and administrative capacity-building were also important.

73. There should be an interactive process between the scientific community and the end user to encourage the development of relevant strategies and technology. There was also a need for technology that could be applied on a small scale in, for instance, the development and utilization of renewable sources, fresh water, building materials and other resources. Thus, technical and economic cooperation could be an important mechanism for the transfer of technology and exchange of experience.

74. In India's view, small island developing States required not just periodic infusions of assistance or technology; the real challenge was to ensure their integration into the world economic system while ensuring self-sustaining development.

75. Mr. DELANEY (Papua New Guinea) said that his Government had been disappointed with the results of the first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, where rhetoric and procedural and legal manoeuvring had been allowed to sidetrack the real issues such as global warming, sealevel rise and the immense potential for atmospheric change, which threatened the existence of island States and their people. Papua New Guinea also regretted that the Alliance of Small Island States had not been invited to take part in the final negotiations.

76. The "Berlin Mandate" had grown out of the conclusion that article 4, subparagraphs 2 (a) and (b) of the Convention were inadequate, and that a process of strengthening should be undertaken with a view to the period beyond the year 2000. Yet what needed strengthening was the Mandate decision itself, and concrete reduction targets should be set for greenhouse gas emissions in the next century, bearing in mind that it was most important to put into effect the proposed protocol on the matter as soon as possible. It should be noted that despite the procedural obstacles that had plagued the process, to the advantage of a small number of countries, some countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development were working towards fulfilling their obligations.

77. On the issue of the Convention secretariat, Papua New Guinea urged all needed support for the establishment of a permanent secretariat in Berlin, so that the States Parties and the Convention process could be assured of the needed financial and technical support.

78. Through the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Papua New Guinea was building up its national capacity with a view to the preparation of a national report for the next Conference of the Parties, to be held in 1997.

79. Preparations for the review and appraisal of the Barbados Programme of Action were of particular interest in connection with the follow-up to the Rio Conference, and it was encouraging that there had been a wide response by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system regarding the implementation of the Programme of Action, particularly the initiatives taken by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. Papua New Guinea favoured strengthening the Department's Small Island Developing States Unit, for it would play a prominent role in implementing the Programme of Action. Also important for its implementation was SIDS/NET, coordinated by UNDP.

80. A more practical approach should be taken in connection with SIDS/TAP. Although thus far it had stressed technical cooperation between Papua New Guinea and its neighbours in the Pacific and in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), local participation in different sectors central to the overall strategy for the implementation of Agenda 21 was being promoted. UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should play an even greater role as catalysts in the exchange of experts among small island developing States and in the long-term establishment of a group of experts from those States within the United Nations system, just as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should expand its valuable work of monitoring and evaluating environmental problems.

81. His Government supported the role of the regional commissions and non-governmental associations in planning and implementing human resource development programmes, and urged that the resources pledged the previous year for the Port Vila Centre should be provided to strengthen its capacity for assistance.

82. Lastly, his delegation reaffirmed its commitment to international cooperation in monitoring, assessing and anticipating of environmental threats and in assisting in case of environmental emergencies, and to the strengthening of the international capacity to monitor global environmental problems.

83. Ms. DORDELLY (Venezuela) said that her delegation supported the statement made by the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Regarding the item Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind, she reiterated the commitments made by Venezuela, under the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

84. Venezuela had formulated policies and established programmes to conserve, preserve and maintain the ecosystem, through its Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources. On many occasions it had emphasized the need, in

international negotiations, to strike a satisfactory balance between development and conservation. It understood clearly and fully accepted the concept of sustainable development. However, implementing the concept called for resources, transfer of technology and favourable conditions. That was one of the areas where the spirit of cooperation in the new international order could be put to the test.

85. The loss of biological diversity was one of the most compelling issues on the global environmental agenda. There was no doubt but that the large-scale extinction of species would affect many of Venezuela's ecosystems, and also Latin America, which was one of the world's major natural reserves; that sorry legacy of the twentieth century must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Convention on Biological Diversity was undoubtedly the appropriate framework within which to promote international cooperation in that sphere.

86. Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) said that the sustainable development of small island developing States constituted an inalienable part of the sustainable development of the developing countries and of the world as a whole. Because of the historical, geographical, economic and biological characteristics of those States, achieving sustainable development would require not only the efforts of those States but also international support. The developed countries in particular had a duty to do their share.

87. Climate change and its adverse effects were a common concern of humanity. Although the industrial revolution had led to the creation of material wealth, it had also resulted in a steady increase in the emissions of greenhouse gases, posing a direct threat to the global ecosystem and the survival of mankind. The entry into force of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1994 and the first session of the Conference of the Parties held in Berlin in March 1995 marked a new phase in the search for solutions to that problem.

88. China believed that the Convention was an important achievement of the Rio Conference, which had laid the foundation for global cooperation in that area. Nevertheless, unless the Parties to the Convention fulfilled their commitments strictly, the goal of the Convention, laudable though it was, would remain a mirage.

89. China welcomed the adoption of the Berlin Mandate for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the decision that the Global Environment Facility should serve as an interim financial mechanism for the Convention. It also supported the negotiations, begun in fulfilment of the Berlin Mandate, to draw up a new legal instrument to enhance the implementation of the commitments on the part of the developed countries to limit and control the emission of greenhouse gases. Her delegation was of the view that the negotiating process should proceed in accordance with the principles established by the Convention and by the Berlin Mandate, and that the result of the negotiations should in no way constitute any increase in the obligations of the developing countries.

90. Although the per capita emission of carbon dioxide in China was less than half the world average, her Government was prepared to join the world community in addressing climate change on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities. To that end, it had formulated "China's Agenda 21" and

adopted all kinds of measures, in the light of China's energy situation as well as the level of its economic development. Those measures sought to promote economic growth, disseminate energy-saving technology, increase energy efficiency and slow the growth in carbon dioxide emissions by enacting national laws in order to make its contribution towards addressing global climate change.

91. Mr. AL-SABBAGH (Kuwait) said that protection of the environment was one of the major concerns of the Kuwaiti Government. It had recently established the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment in order to enhance regional cooperation in that area.

92. The environmental damage resulting from Iraqi aggression against Kuwait had yet to be fully evaluated, but it could be said that the burning of 700 oil wells and spillage of millions of tons of crude oil on land and in the waters of the Arabian Gulf had caused incalculable damage. It would be many decades before land flooded with oil could be used for agriculture, and marine plants and animals would not recover easily from the contamination they had suffered. The effects of the clouds of smoke and the acid rain which had fallen as a result of the oil-well fires had also not been evaluated. Furthermore the mines laid by the Iraqi forces had produced hundreds of casualties among the elderly, the young and children.

93. In addition, according to a recent investigation by the International Maritime Organization, the wrecks of large tankers in the northern Arabian Gulf posed a direct threat to the safety of international navigation and ecological balance.

94. Kuwait requested the International Maritime Organization to supervise the operation to salvage and remove the Iraqi tanker Amoria and the vessels Remela and Aynzalla, which had sunk in international waters, in cooperation with the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment.

95. Mr. RONNEBERG (Marshall Islands) said that his Government supported the comprehensive and ambitious programme adopted at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which fit in well with its own efforts. The Marshall Islands had adopted a National Environment Management Strategy and had set up an Interministerial Commission for implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action on the national level; it was also cooperating with some neighbouring countries in implementing the Programme.

96. For many smaller countries, regional cooperation in financing projects was the most logical and viable solution. The Pacific island countries had made regional cooperation their modus operandi on environmental issues. They were executing projects dealing, inter alia, with the preservation of biodiversity, protection of coastal zones and climate change.

97. Many activities were being undertaken to implement the principles agreed at Rio and reiterated in subsequent conferences, but his delegation was not convinced that all members of the international community were equally committed to those principles. The Marshall Islands fully supported the recent findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The storms which had devastated the Marshall Islands had contaminated many of the freshwater

supplies; some members of the Alliance of Small Island States were threatened with disappearance because of sea-level rise. It was clear, therefore, that the need to adopt measures under the Framework Convention had taken on new urgency. Short-term economic interests were impeding that work, however. If the further sale of oil was given a higher value than the lives of island peoples around the world, then the ideals of the United Nations would be violated. The Berlin Mandate was not ideal, but it was the minimum acceptable response. Developed countries which had not yet met their obligations under the Convention on Climate Change must begin to do so. The very survival of a number of islands was at stake.

98. The international community had endorsed the concept of environmental impact assessments and the developed countries had given much advice on how to minimize damage to the environment. The Ministry of the Environment of France had issued a report which dealt at great length with the fragility of coral reefs and the need to ensure that development activities did not endanger them, and proposed that an environmental impact assessment should be conducted in all cases. Such an environmental impact assessment was precisely what the leaders of the South Pacific Forum had asked France to carry out before proceeding with its nuclear tests, but their pleas had gone unheeded. They had been promised an environmental impact assessment after the tests were completed, but that was absurd, because the damage would then be irreparable. There was enough nuclear material stored in Mururoa to leave the Pacific without life. His Government was not convinced of the safety of the tests, and would continue to demand that an environmental impact assessment be carried out before any more tests were conducted. The studies conducted by the Government of France were not comprehensive; they were not sufficiently independent, nor did they look at cumulative effects.

99. His delegation had raised the issue in the First Committee, where it and other delegations had been accused of introducing emotional elements into the debate. The Marshall Islands did not agree, and would like the delegations present to study the matter in depth. Accordingly, he would distribute a copy of the statement he had made in the First Committee together with a map of the nuclear testing zone provided by the French Ministry of Defence, on which the Pacific Island countries were not even shown.

100. The Marshall Islands hoped that the Committee would reaffirm the need for environmental impact assessments and would send a clear message to the effect that sustainable development was threatened by the testing of nuclear weapons.

101. Mr. LEUNG (Fiji) endorsed the statement of the representative of Samoa. France should stop the nuclear tests, which were definitely harmful to the environment. He welcomed the commencement of the Berlin Mandate. Given the importance of negotiations to strengthen the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the secretariat of the Convention should support the widest possible participation in those negotiations, particularly for the special categories of countries mentioned in article 4 (8) of the Convention.

102. His delegation was concerned that, at the end of the first session of the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate, the question of the composition of the bureau of the Conference of the Parties had not been fully resolved. It would

be justified and proper to include a small island developing State in the bureau. Small island developing countries of the Pacific were the most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Despite that fact, some of the delegations had tried to undermine the right of self-preservation of such States by working to frustrate closure of the question of the rules of procedure. Fiji would take all necessary steps to preserve that right and hoped that that issue as well as other procedural matters would be resolved once and for all so that the Ad Hoc Group could focus on the drafting of a protocol.

103. Much still remained to be done. First, annex I parties needed to fulfil their commitments under the Convention. Second, those commitments must be strengthened. Third, no new commitments should be imposed on developing countries. Fourth, the Ad Hoc Group should have regard in its negotiations to the provisions of article 4 (7) of the Convention, namely that economic and social development as well as poverty eradication would remain priorities for developing countries. Fifth, Fiji continued to subscribe to the view that the targets set at the Toronto World Conference on Climate Change and the Alliance of Small Island States Protocol must be the basis for negotiations within the Ad Hoc Group.

104. His delegation accepted the views in the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and urged the industrialized countries which were responsible for the largest share of harmful emissions to assume leadership of the negotiations for the remaining sessions of the Ad Hoc Group.

105. With respect to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, he regretted that a lack of political will had prevented most developed countries from allocating adequate financial resources to enable developing countries to tackle the problems of environmental degradation. Developing countries recognized that they bore the main responsibility for implementing Agenda 21, but their efforts required external assistance. If the target for official development assistance was not met, there would be serious reneging of commitments made at Rio. The more affluent industrialized countries must recognize their responsibility and take urgent steps to assist small island developing States to implement the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

106. He commended the decision of the Inter-agency Commission on Sustainable Development to request task managers to include a separate section on small island developing States in their respective reports and welcomed the designation of new task managers for areas of the Programme of Action not covered by Agenda 21.

107. He had noted with interest the section of the report of the Secretary-General relating to the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (A/50/422), in particular the paragraphs relating to the Small Island Developing States Unit. Not only should the Department be responsible for monitoring and coordination; it must also assume a greater catalytic role within the United Nations system with a view to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. He looked forward to the publication on select sources of funding for

small island developing States as well as the compilation of an information database for those States.

108. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was carrying out valuable work for small island developing States. He was pleased to note that important issues such as climate change and sealevel rise, natural disasters and the protection of coastal and marine resources were featured in the UNEP work programme. He also welcomed the fact that UNEP had decided to hold training workshops on environmentally sound forms of tourism development. Tourism was a significant component of the Fiji economy. His Government would therefore be happy to consider hosting a regional workshop in conjunction with UNEP on that subject.

109. Mr. DELACROIX (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said it had been proved that French policy in the South Pacific was not harmful to the environment and that his country had constantly been concerned to verify that fact. Independent experts had periodically conducted scientific research and had arrived at the conclusion that the underground nuclear tests did not have any effect from the radiation or geological viewpoint; nor did they affect the fauna or flora. That diagnosis had been confirmed in the report submitted by a group of Australian scientists to the meeting of South Pacific Forum Environment Ministers recently held in Brisbane. It was the responsibility of the representatives of South Pacific Forum countries to refute the conclusions of their own experts.

110. France had shown a constant concern for transparency and openness. However, it wished the dialogue on such issues to be carried out in the appropriate forum. The First Committee was currently considering all aspects of that question. He hoped that those who were questioning his country would have the prudence to restrict such debates to the First Committee and thus avoid politicizing the work of the Second Committee whose effectiveness would be undermined.

111. Mrs. WILLIAMS-STEWART (Samoa), replying to the representative of France, said that the concerns expressed with respect to the French nuclear tests were very relevant to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Those concerns related to the health of women and children and the protection of the environment, the only resource that countries of the region had.

112. France maintained that the scientific evidence submitted on the safety of its nuclear testing programme was conclusive, but the evidence had been fragmentary and did not cover all aspects. France had been reluctant to provide the countries of the Pacific with all the evidence requested and had not submitted definitive proof attesting to the validity of its statements on the safety of its nuclear tests.

113. If the nuclear tests did not pose any danger to health, as France claimed, she wondered why they were not carried out in mainland France. If there was such conclusive scientific evidence that the French nuclear tests were not harmful to the people and environment of the South Pacific, then it should be made available to the countries of the region.

114. She once again urged France to carry out an environmental impact study in order to prove what it was asserting.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.